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New York

President:	Mr. García Belaunde	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Rogachev
	Slovakia	Mr. Matulay
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826)

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06-63086 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, Finland, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Uganda in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; and Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang, representative of Save the Children.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the following documents: S/2006/826, containing the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict; S/2006/662, containing the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan; S/2006/835, containing the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire; and S/2006/851 and S/2006/851/Corr.1, containing the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Burundi.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General and invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: First of all, Mr. President, let me thank you and your delegation for organizing this debate on an important topic. I think we can all look forward to a very constructive discussion.

The protection of children caught up in armed conflict has been among my main priorities as Secretary-General. During the past 10 years, we have tried to place the issue firmly on the international agenda. Since 1998, when the first Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict began his work and the Council held its first open debate on the subject, this issue has gained greater visibility. The Council's annual debates have benefited from the participation of non-governmental organizations — and, at times, children themselves — and have demonstrated that there is a gathering will to act against those who recruit and continue to use child soldiers.

The past decade has also seen important gains in the elaboration of international legal standards for the protection of children. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) classifies the recruitment of children into fighting forces as a war crime and a crime against humanity. The International Labour Organization's Convention No. 182 defines child soldiering as one of the worst forms of child labour. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child outlaws child soldiering. And the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict established 18 as the minimum age for children's participation in hostilities.

The Security Council itself has been part of this progress. Its resolutions have highlighted six grave violations, drawn from international humanitarian law, that concern children affected by armed conflict: killing and maiming, abduction, child soldiers, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and the

denial of humanitarian access. Today, the international community is shifting its focus from the elaboration of standards to the provision of real protection. In the past year alone, we have seen encouraging signals that impunity for crimes against children will no longer be tolerated. The ICC is prosecuting Thomas Lubanga Dyilo for conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 years and using them to participate actively in hostilities. For the first time, a former head of State, Charles Taylor, is being brought to account, for violations committed against children during the conflict in Liberia.

It is incumbent upon all of us to sustain that political and practical momentum, and to keep a close eye on situations of concern. To that end, last year, the Security Council called for the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism. The mechanism is now at work in seven countries and is providing timely and reliable information to a Task Force chaired by my Special Representative. That information forms the basis of my bimonthly reports to the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and has resulted in targeted measures against offending parties. Those measures have led warring parties to come forward and to agree to concrete action plans to respect the rights of children. By now the Council will have received the report on the independent assessment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. I urge the Council to consider the recommendations that have been made to strengthen the monitoring process.

The United Nations system will continue to do its part in this effort. UNICEF has made protection an essential ingredient of its work and is taking the lead in the field. Department of Peacekeeping Operations child protection advisers have been attached to several peacekeeping operations, reporting to the respective Special Representatives. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights are also playing active roles in the monitoring and reporting mechanism. My Special Representative has just finalized a two-year strategic framework to assist her in better fulfilling her special role as an independent moral voice.

Not so long ago, the problem faced by children in situations of armed conflict was, in important respects, an invisible issue. Little was known, and even less was said. The initiatives I have just described represent significant progress. Yet, we have only begun to scratch the surface. I hope that the Council will consolidate the gains that have been made and will move forward to cover all situations of concern and all grave violations. The tangible gains of the past few years show that, when there is political will in the Council, we can make life better for the millions of children trapped in situations of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: I have the honour to present the sixth annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826), in the presence of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. One of his most enduring legacies will be the measures that have been taken in the past 10 years to protect children in armed conflict. We are grateful for his leadership, his vision and his encouragement.

(*spoke in French*)

Over the past several years, the Security Council has taken unprecedented steps to help children affected by armed conflict and has stepped up its efforts to protect the most vulnerable. Resolution 1612 (2005), which was adopted in July 2005, was an important development, in that it established the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. That seminal resolution provided the Council with a more effective framework for its work. The Working Group meets every two months to consider reports on situations of concern and to take concrete steps in the interests of war-affected children.

(*spoke in English*)

Indeed, I am happy to report a number of successes since the Secretary-General submitted his report last year. As is attested in the Secretary-General's sixth annual report, the United Nations system in country situations of concern has increased the flow of timely, accurate, objective and reliable information to the Council. The United Nations country teams in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan, Sri Lanka and Nepal have come together in very short order to produce reports of quality which have served as a starting point to the Security Council

Working Group's action on behalf of children in those key situations of concern. The Council's Working Group, under the capable chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of France, has worked at an impressive pace to outline a programme of action for 2006. It has also defined a working "tool kit" of possible actions the Council can take to protect children from the most grave abuses perpetrated against them.

Furthermore, the Working Group, in cooperation with concerned Member States, has undertaken a series of very useful recommendations on country situation reports on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. I would like to stress that the hallmark of the monitoring and reporting exercise mandated by resolution 1612 (2005), as well as the annual reporting to the Council, has been a constructive dialogue at all levels with the Member States concerned for the benefit of war-affected children.

In addition to the monitoring process under resolution 1612 (2005), other successes have been recorded in conflict situations. Many of the peace agreements signed over the last few years, including in Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi and the Sudan, have included child protection provisions and a framework for child demobilization. We hope that such provisions will be standard paragraphs in all peace agreements in situations where children have been combatants. In that regard, I would like to raise my sincere hope to see concerted attention to the immediate release of children associated with fighting forces in the peace talks currently under way in Nepal.

After the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), parties approached UNICEF and our office to enter into action plans to demobilize child soldiers. Commitments have been made by parties in Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, Myanmar and Uganda. We hope to consolidate those gains by ensuring that we move beyond good intentions to actually facilitating the formulation of action plans and the timely release of children so that they may be reintegrated into their respective societies. We are also happy to report that the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories have extended invitations to me to visit their countries in order to enter into a constructive dialogue regarding issues relating to children and armed conflict. I hope to conclude those visits in the first half of 2007.

Despite those progressive developments, many challenges remain and more action has to be taken to protect the interests of children trapped in situations of armed conflict. Though a great deal has been done in formulating standards and receiving commitments, the actual implementation on the ground is far from satisfactory. The issue needs to be properly mainstreamed within the United Nations system, in line with the recommendations of the independent review of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Furthermore, parties should be made aware of the consequences if they do not live up to their commitments. We therefore note with appreciation the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group and hope to monitor closely the follow-up action of the parties concerned.

So far, the process of scrutiny and monitoring has been selective and focused on only a few countries. It is our belief, jointly shared with UNICEF and other partners, that we must expand the focus to all situations of armed conflict so that there is equal treatment of children, regardless of where they live. That is important for the process to be seen as legitimate and fair, as well as in the interest of the children concerned. We urge the Security Council Working Group to move the agenda forward, in consultation with the countries concerned.

The recruitment and use of child soldiers have been the main concern of the Council and the gateway to the annexed lists of the annual Secretary-General's report. We feel that this was a great step forward for the Council, and parties that continue to engage in that serious crime must be put on notice that targeted measures will be undertaken against persistent violators.

However, there are five other grave violations which also deserve our attention. In particular, we would like to draw the attention of the Council to the increasing number of reports of sexual violence as an instrument of war. It is our belief that the gateway to the annexed list of parties should include all the grave violations. We are especially eager to reflect grave sexual violence more fully in the annexed lists, as that crime is of special gravity and the number of children experiencing grave sexual abuse as a weapon of war grows year by year. We urge the Council to consider that measure as an important step forward in the monitoring process in the coming years.

As we watch the events unfold around the world, there are new substantive issues that are also emerging that have grave implications for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Increasingly in warfare around the world, the distinction between civilians and combatants is not respected. In the recent conflict in Lebanon, more children were killed than combatants. It is important that the Security Council and Member States reiterate their commitment to actively upholding international humanitarian law. Those laws and standards have been negotiated over two centuries. The principles of protecting civilians, of proportionality, of keeping military assets away from civilian centres and of respecting safe zones, such as schools and hospitals, have been the hallmarks of that international consensus. It is equally important that States and non-State actors respect those laws of war, and it is important that the Security Council send a clear message that deviations from those principles will be condemned.

Another issue that concerns us is the migration of child soldiers and the recycling of those children within conflict zones. In many countries, after demobilization, many child soldiers are remobilized and, with the help of other parties and sometimes mercenaries, often end up in neighbouring countries. We know of cases of children who have been demobilized in Sierra Leone and then resurfaced in Côte d'Ivoire, and of similar movements of demobilized children in the Great Lakes region of Africa. For our work to be successful, it is essential that the longer-term reintegration needs of child soldiers and other children affected by war be given as much importance as the punishment of perpetrators. The effectiveness and sustainability of demobilization and reintegration programmes run by national Governments, United Nations agencies, and international and local non-governmental organizations will finally determine whether children scarred by war will reap the benefits of a peaceful future.

At lunchtime today, our office will host an event. We will bring together children of war who have seized the opportunities available to them and who have made a great success of their lives. They will speak to the United Nations community of their experiences. Theirs is the story of hope and the triumph of the human will. It is their life story that tells us that, if we are committed to the protection of children in those conflict zones, we can help them to rebuild their lives and to become outstanding citizens. The human spirit, especially in children, is resilient. It is important that we build on that resilience and give them all the necessary support and protection.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Veneman: I very much appreciate the opportunity to address the Security Council. I congratulate the membership and you, Sir, on keeping our collective attention focused on the important issue of children and armed conflict.

I would particularly like to express sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his steadfast commitment and dedication to children affected by armed conflict. Under his leadership, the United Nations has made significant progress in highlighting the plight of the most vulnerable and in ensuring that the United Nations system responds to their needs.

I would also like to acknowledge the strong advocacy on this issue of my colleague, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Today, like any other day, hundreds of thousands of children wake and begin their day as child soldiers fighting in adult wars. Or they may be sexually exploited or trafficked. The reasons for these conflicts are complex, but the result is simple: children bear the brunt of these conflicts. It is estimated that 43 million children are out of school, that 4 to 5 million children have been physically disabled over the past two years, and that 80 per cent of refugees fleeing war are women and children.

Again this year, the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2005/826) indicates that children continue to be deliberately targeted in conflicts. The report provides detailed information on six grave violations of children's rights perpetrated by over 40 parties in more than 20 conflict-affected countries. These violations against children continue to be committed in defiance of agreed international norms and standards. However, by naming the parties that continue to recruit or use child soldiers, the Security Council has demonstrated its determination to match words with deeds. Those who violate the international standards for the protection of children can no longer do so with impunity. The lists

annexed to the report represent an important step forward in our efforts to induce compliance by parties to conflict with international child protection standards.

The report notes that, despite the progress made with respect to the protection of children in several situations of armed conflict, new areas of concern require our attention. We remain deeply concerned by the ongoing conflicts in several countries highlighted in this year's report. In the occupied Palestinian territories, an estimated 119 Palestinian children have been killed this year, more than twice the total number of child deaths registered in 2005. Children and adolescents represent more than half the population in the territories, and they are living through a terrifying siege that will likely have an enduring impact. They have seen family members killed and their communities destroyed. It is time to scale up protection and support to children in this fractured region.

In Chad, the ongoing fighting between Government forces and the armed opposition, and the presence of Sudanese rebels from the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) has led to tremendous insecurity in the refugee camps and continuous attacks on surrounding villages. Children are at particular risk, and the Government must ensure the safety of refugees and local populations.

Earlier this year, I visited the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo together with the High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Jim Morris. We listened to shocking first-hand accounts of routine rape and sexual exploitation used as weapons against young girls and women in the conflict that continues to rage in the region.

This year's report also provides information on two specific areas critical to enhanced protection of children from conflict: the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the implementation of action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children as soldiers.

Over the course of the past year, the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict have demonstrated concerted attention to the concerns of children affected by armed conflict. I would like to thank His Excellency the Permanent Representative of France for his stewardship and for the action taken by the Working Group to address the issue of impunity for rights violations.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) will continue to support the further strengthening of the monitoring and reporting systems, as called for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). Activities for 2007 will focus on finalizing a global database and information management system, supporting capacity-building for key partners through training on information gathering, developing appropriate programme responses and defining global and country-level advocacy strategies.

We appreciate the initial start-up of funds received for the development of the monitoring and reporting mechanism from the Governments of the United Kingdom, Norway and Canada. Additional funding will be required for country-level activities, particularly to support systematic programmes to address rights violations committed against children.

Working closely with many partners, UNICEF continues to negotiate for humanitarian access and to engage in dialogue with parties to end the recruitment and use of children associated with fighting forces.

We also support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, with a special emphasis on the needs of girls and working with many others to ensure that the essential focus on reintegration helps to ensure that children can return to their communities where feasible. For example, last year in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and UNICEF developed a comprehensive action plan with the leadership of the Forces nouvelles in an effort to end the association of children with fighting forces in the conflict.

In Colombia, we have supported local partners in a effort called Playing for Peace, which promotes sports, education for peace and systems of social coexistence among vulnerable adolescents, while contributing to the prevention of voluntary recruitment of youths into illegal armed groups. By the end of this year, Playing for Peace will be active in 60 municipalities. Together with other similar projects, these initiatives are benefiting almost 19,000 children and youths in the country.

When children are uprooted and traumatized by armed conflict, education can play a key role in bringing stability and security back to their lives.

Education has a broader impact to help re-establish a normal routine within communities threatened by violence and war. Education provides a means to reach war-affected children with information on health and safety, landmine awareness, HIV/AIDS prevention, gender sensitivity, human rights and life skills. Education contributes to building an environment supportive of future peacebuilding efforts. In this light, education must be restored as soon as possible during and after conflict.

The impact of war and violence on children may also have long-term consequences for the formation of children's values, identity and political beliefs and of their ability to function as leaders and decision-makers in the future. Thus, the pursuit of peace is integral to the fulfilment of children's rights, including their rights to physical safety, health and well-being.

And children, young people and women must be part of the solution. Young people have distinct experiences in armed conflict, distinct needs and distinct capacities for recovering and contributing to peacebuilding. They mentor and tutor other children and provide friendship and companionship for one another. They often generate a livelihood for themselves and their families and take on leadership roles.

Children and young people and the contributions they make are therefore a major part of the solution to armed conflict. Yet experience in countries where demobilization exercises and justice-sector reforms have neglected to include children has shown that a lack of attention to the specific needs of children has a negative effect for young people themselves, and can also undermine the peacebuilding effort.

Finally, UNICEF wishes to lend its support to the recommendations contained the report. We have made significant progress over the past year. Today, we must renew our commitment to the children who are impacted by this unacceptable practice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang, representative of Save the Children.

Mr. Oling Olang: First, allow me to express our deep appreciation for the invitation to Save the Children to participate in today's open debate on children and armed conflict. We take it to reflect increased interest by the Security Council in the reality facing far too many children today.

I am the District Manager for Save the Children for the Gulu district in northern Uganda, my home area where I have lived and worked for the last five years. Today I will share with you some of my experiences in this war-ravaged area, knowing that not only do I speak from our first-hand knowledge, but also that we represent the situation of many, many more children around the world, living during or in the aftermath of crisis and conflict. Their situation is similar in more ways than one, whether they live in different corners of the world such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Nepal, the occupied Palestinian territories or the Sudan, to name only a few, or in my own country.

Save the Children welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826) and its reflection of progress made to date. However, there are three themes we believe are neglected in the international community's response to children in conflict: stronger pressure for humanitarian access, special attention to girls associated with armed forces and the funding that that would require, and better response to reports of violations against children.

In 2004 the Secretary-General reported that 10 million people were denied access to humanitarian relief. As over half of the vulnerable population tends to be under the age of 18, that means millions of children are stranded without access to vital assistance and protection. The lack of access or denial of access is a fundamental problem that demands concerted international pressure both on a country-by-country basis and at global levels. Which diplomatic initiatives have really tried to tackle this critical issue for children and their communities?

We at Save the Children appreciate that the Secretary-General makes a special note of the concerns of girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups. In our experience disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) have not at all been suitable for girls' needs. There are lessons to be learned, and a better way to find solutions is by asking the girls themselves. We find that the girls, often young mothers, ask for measures that will give them a true sense of belonging and livelihood. We call on the Security Council to ensure that DDRR activities reflect these realities.

Of course, if DDRR is going to work it requires increased funding from donors for the rehabilitation and reintegration phases. The international community must open its eyes to this fact, and we must all tailor our response to the special needs of girls. We concur on the need to ensure that these measures are long term and sustainable, rather than face the situation in which we currently find ourselves, whereby we constantly shortchange the programmes, thereby increasing the chances of re-recruitment and harmful coping mechanisms of extremely vulnerable children.

Tremendous progress has been made with the new monitoring and reporting mechanism, but we now have a better picture of the situations at hand. With that knowledge comes increased responsibility; appropriate and concrete responses to the reports should be the next step. It is not enough to have access to an emergency number if no ambulance or support will come in response. The Security Council must come up with stronger ways of protecting children on the ground. The increasing number of United Nations Child Protection Advisors (CPAs) being deployed into crises is a start. The CPA system should be extended and better supported if mainstreaming child protection in missions is to become a reality. If not, the monitoring risks become merely a hollow instrument.

Save the Children wholeheartedly endorses the recommendation by the Secretary-General in his report that the Security Council consider expanding the focus of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. The Council should also devote equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern, and give equal weight to all categories of grave violations beyond the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, including killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence.

What can be done for these children? Let me start with a picture. A child today in northern Uganda is likely to have lived his or her entire life in a camp for internally displaced populations. Some Council members have seen these camps — cramped, lacking in services, short of water and electricity. The old village system has broken down and children are left without bare necessities, supervision, guidance and, until recently, hope. We have found that education and catering to protection needs in every humanitarian response is key to successful interventions.

Save the Children, in our present worldwide challenge — Rewrite the Future — is calling for education for all children affected by armed conflict. Education should be funded and programmed as part of every humanitarian response, as it is proven to lower infant mortality rate and increase children's resistance to forced recruitment and exploitation, such as forced prostitution. Education is a crucial part of a child's survival strategy and also teaches life skills, such as landmine awareness, protection from HIV/AIDS, hygiene and disease prevention. In many societies, reaching maturity without basic skills in literacy and health can be a death sentence of gruelling work and dying young.

I cannot help but to remind the Council that we are talking about measures for children who are still present, but what about the ones who are missing and unaccounted for? We need to be creative and come up with ways to account for them too. I have no easy answers, but this issue needs to be resolved.

Finally, let me encourage the Security Council to continue its ground-breaking path to correct the wrongs for children affected by armed conflict, and invite its members to continue their visits to places of gravest concern, both to draw the world's attention to the needs of these children, while establishing dialogues between parties concerned, and to meet community and civil society representatives on a regular basis, both here and elsewhere. Save the Children is happy to continue this dialogue and to work on finding proper responses to make dramatic changes for children affected by armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for the initiative that you have taken to hold this public debate on children and armed conflict. The importance of what is at stake and the seriousness of the situation deserve the continuing attention of the Security Council in this regard.

Ten years ago, the Machel Report contributed to putting the theme of child soldiers and, more generally, children in armed conflict on the international community's agenda. Today, how can one help but be shocked by the facts that are contained in the Secretary-General's report before us (S/2006/826), by elements that he personally has just shared with us and also by the cruel realities just recalled by his Special Representative, Ms. Coomaraswamy, by the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman, and by the representative of Save the Children, Mr. Oling Olang.

Many parties, specifically armed rebel groups but also in certain cases Government armed forces or militias associated with them, continue to recruit or use children in armed conflict. In Ituri, in Darfur or in northern Uganda, young girls continue to be the victims of the most serious forms of sexual violence in a systematic manner. The kidnapping of children, to recruit them as combatants, to reduce them to slavery for armed groups, to make them disappear within the framework of a policy of ethnic cleansing, or even with the aim of obtaining ransom, continues to be widespread. When it is not schools that are attacked, it is often the children themselves who are killed, wounded or even denied access to care by the belligerents.

The conclusion, therefore, is a stark one, but does that mean that we have done nothing? Despite the sense of disgust that we may feel at times, given the ongoing violations in the field, we do need to acknowledge the work done by the Security Council to assume its responsibilities. Since 1999, no other thematic issue on the Council's agenda has been the subject of such sustained and operational attention. As a result, and due to the adoption of Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), today we have many tools necessary to fight the scourge.

First, specific standards exist, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its second Optional Protocol, as well as the Rome Statute. The international community has also identified the best practices for the demobilization of children and their reintegration into their communities through the so-called Cap principles, which will be revised and enhanced during a conference to be held by France and UNICEF next 5 and 6 February in Paris.

Secondly, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF are working together to fight abuse and protect children, each party doing so with respect for the mandate of the other and in close cooperation with other actors in the United Nations system. My delegation wishes to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the actions of Ms. Coomaraswamy and of UNICEF.

Thirdly, a monitoring and reporting network has been set up in several countries in conflict, allowing for the gathering, verifying and summarizing of information. That is the monitoring and reporting mechanism launched by resolution 1612 (2005) of July 2005. I wish to pay tribute to the devotion and courage of the players in the field, in particular the child protection advisers working with the peacekeeping operations, the workers of UNICEF and humanitarian workers of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who support the mechanism, sometimes at the cost of very serious risk, even imperilling their lives. Without them nothing would be possible.

As a last point but not the least, the Security Council is now specifically and regularly following the issue in the Working Group established by resolution 1612 (2005), which France has the honour to chair. UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General are closely associated with its activities.

Initially, the Working Group adopted all necessary decisions to ensure its proper operation, in particular its terms of reference, a detailed programme of work and a list of tools for action and reaction — the toolbox. In June 2006, it also began to consider in detail the situation of children in specific armed conflicts and adopted operational conclusions with respect to the situation of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Sudan. It is preparing to adopt decisions with respect to Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire and will shortly receive reports from the Secretary-General on Sri Lanka, Somalia and Nepal.

I also note that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/826) refers to a number of encouraging developments with respect to our actions. For example, there is the release of child soldiers by the armed forces of the Forces nouvelles in Côte d'Ivoire, within the framework of a plan of action that was negotiated following the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). There is also the current trial of Thomas Lubanga in the International Criminal Court (ICC). Those initial encouraging signs should motivate us to

redouble our efforts to narrow the gap between our actions here and the concrete results of those actions in conflict situations.

How are we to narrow that gap and further strengthen the effectiveness of our actions? First, we must make better known what the Security Council is doing. That is one of the goals of today's discussion. Then, we must signal our desire to encourage and specifically support, again and always, cooperation between the United Nations and those parties who use children, in order to put an end to those practices. The field visits of Ms. Coomaraswamy or her representatives can be constructive in that regard and must be continued. We encourage all States affected by the scourge of child soldiers to receive the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. From our delegation's point of view, cooperation is the priority avenue. It is probably the key that will enable us to better and more effectively address all the situations set out in the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General.

No one can doubt our vigilance with respect to all of those who fuel the vicious circle of violence. The non-governmental organizations that took part in the Arria formula debate yesterday reminded us that of the 38 parties listed in the annexes of the latest report of the Secretary-General, 16 have been listed each year since 2002, and not all of them have necessarily followed up with regard to the dialogues proposed to them. Therefore, the Security Council must be prepared, as specifically set forth in its resolutions, to use the entire arsenal of measures available to punish those who defy its authority by refusing to comply with its resolutions.

Lastly, we must work further on the link between security and development. The lack of a future for children undermines all prevention and demobilization efforts. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the start of its work provide possibilities in that area, in order to specifically assure that the trend cited in the report of the Secretary-General — the migration of child soldiers with no future to neighbouring conflicts — is better dealt with through the weapon of reintegration.

The fight against the use of child soldiers, against violations of the rights of the child and against impunity for the perpetrators of atrocities is a long-term struggle that demands tireless efforts. The report of the Secretary-General and its recommendations must continue to guide our actions in this area in order to achieve what I believe is a shared and ultimate goal — that no violation in any conflict should escape the attention of the international community, and that no child should continue to feel abandoned and thus denied any future other than that of war.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I would like to thank you, Sir, for organizing today's open debate with regard to the sixth report of the Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict (S/2006/826) and to thank you for taking the time to preside personally over this important meeting. I also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman, and the representative of Save the Children, Mr. Oling Olang, for their comprehensive briefings.

Greece fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered later by Finland on behalf of the European Union. However, I would like to make the following remarks.

In our view, the sixth report on children and armed conflict fully addresses the main issues underlined in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and submits specific and well-focused recommendations which deserve our careful consideration and eventual support.

In particular, we appreciate that specific information is provided with regard to the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as to other grave violations of children's rights. The fact that the report identifies around 40 armed groups in 12 conflict zones as being involved in the recruitment, killing, maiming, abduction, rape, sexual abuse and exploitation of children raises the greatest concerns. The fact that these crimes are committed against the most vulnerable groups such as girls, refugees and internally displaced children makes the situation even worse and, by all accounts, intolerable.

It is encouraging that the issue remains high on the agenda of the Security Council, which, by adopting six resolutions since 1999, has contributed to the international recognition of the responsibility to protect the human rights of children in armed conflict. In particular, we appreciate the important developments in connection with the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), which have enabled the Council to undertake a

more pragmatic approach to further promoting all related issues at hand.

The first major step in that context has been the gradual setting up of a monitoring and reporting mechanism, starting with situations on the Council's agenda. During the initial phase, the mechanism has produced country-specific reports with well-documented and therefore reliable information. Of course, and as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, its full implementation is a complex issue. We believe, however, that it will eventually serve the purpose of its establishment in an effective way. The recent report of the independent review of the mechanism clearly points in that direction.

The second important development was the establishment, in November 2005, of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, chaired by France. Greece is convinced that the Working Group can assist the Security Council in better evaluating the reports of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and in formulating appropriate actions to protect children affected by armed conflict.

I would also like to underline the importance that Greece attaches to fighting impunity by bringing perpetrators to justice. It is the primary responsibility of States to take all necessary relevant measures. In addition, the International Criminal Court can ensure accountability for international crimes committed against children.

Another significant issue is that much more has to be done with regard to elaborating and implementing action plans to end the recruitment of child soldiers and to ensure their release by the parties concerned. The Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be commended for the crucial role they play in that respect.

With regard to post-conflict situations, special attention should be given to ensuring that all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes include provisions to address the specific needs of children associated with armed groups, such as reunification with their families, medical support, education and vocational training.

Protecting children in armed conflict requires hard work and a variety of measures, which presupposes the will and active involvement of national Governments, armed groups and the international community. The underpinning of all efforts is the ability to conduct a continuous dialogue with all parties to an armed conflict. In that regard, the role of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF is commendable and very important.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to emphasize once more that we all share responsibility for the loss of innocent lives and the tremendous suffering of children in armed conflict. Therefore, and notwithstanding the challenges and difficulties, we are obliged to work to create a safe, secure and enabling environment for the development of the world's children.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, the Chinese delegation would like to thank you, Mr. Minister, for coming here to New York to preside over this meeting. We should like also to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their briefings. In addition, we thank the Secretary-General for his presence at this meeting and for his statement.

China attaches great importance to the Council's discussion of this issue. We are opposed to the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to other violations of the rights and interests of children in armed conflict. It is our hope that the Council will play its unique role in the consideration of this question. China explained its position in detail in July this year, when the Council last debated the issue (see S/PV.5494). Here, I should like to highlight the following points.

First, the Council needs to continue to carry out its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. All armed conflicts inevitably put children and other vulnerable groups in harm's way. If the Council is able to prevent, reduce the number of and resolve conflict situations by tackling their root causes, it will be providing the best possible protection for children. We consider that approach to be far more meaningful and effective than any attempt to remedy the situation after conflict has already broken out. The events of the past year bear that out. The recent escalation of tension in part of the

Middle East has once again taken a heavy toll on the lives of many children, whereas positive developments in peace processes in other regions of the world have brought hopes to children. That is further proof that the Security Council should devote more attention to the conflicts themselves.

Secondly, in considering the issue of children and armed conflict, the Council needs to draw a distinction between the situations that are on its agenda and those that are not. The work of the Council is based on country-specific situations. While the question of children and armed conflict is a thematic issue on the Council's agenda, it is closely linked to particular peace processes and to the specific nature of particular conflicts.

The situations on the Council's agenda are essentially different from those not on its agenda. It is true that the Council should be concerned about the protection of children in both types of situations; nonetheless, it should follow different approaches in dealing with them. Relevant resolutions of the Security Council have specific provisions to that effect. Furthermore, many countries not on the Council's agenda have misgivings about the motives behind and implications of the Council's consideration of the situations in their countries. Therefore, the Council should try to allay their concerns by engaging them in dialogue and cooperation so as to convince them that the purpose of its work is to protect children.

Thirdly, we need to continue to improve the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, as well as the work carried out by the Working Group. Although progress has been made since the mechanism became operational, a little more than a year ago, it is still at an early stage of application. With the independent review only recently completed, the mechanism needs to be improved through further practice and should refrain from moving too fast or acting too hastily.

The Working Group has deliberated on the situations of children in many countries and has made recommendations to the Security Council. China hopes that the Working Group will continue to demonstrate professionalism and that, as a result of cooperation and constructive discussions with the Governments concerned, it will continue to submit effective recommendations to the Council.

Furthermore, China has always advised against the frequent resort to sanctions or threats of sanctions by the Security Council, and we consider caution to be especially necessary with regard to the question of children and armed conflict. Every conflict situation is different, and there can be no generalizations or a one-size-fits-all approach. We need to work with the countries concerned and encourage and support their efforts to protect children. We hope that the work of the Security Council can truly improve the plight of children in armed conflict.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister, and the delegation of Peru for holding today's debate. We appreciate your presiding over this meeting personally to address this important issue. I also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang, representative of Save the Children, for their briefings.

Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/826), submitted to the Council pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), on the implementation of that resolution and related resolutions. The content of the Secretary-General's report is of great interest to us. Although progress has been made with respect to the protection of children, the situation of children affected by armed conflict continues to be grave and alarming. The recent conflict in the Middle East region, for example, showed once again that children bear the main brunt of conflict. Sadly, in many parts of the world, cases of the recruitment and abusive use of children and other grave violations against children in armed conflict persist.

Japan fully supports actions, as recommended in the report, whereby the United Nations energetically calls upon parties to conflict to prepare concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and the use of children in violation of applicable international obligations.

Japan welcomes the establishment of monitoring and reporting mechanisms in several countries — Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, the Sudan, Nepal and Sri Lanka — as signs of encouraging progress. We look forward to receiving objective and reliable information on the violations being committed against children with a view to contributing to efforts to remedy such abuses.

We commend the reports submitted by the monitoring and reporting mechanism regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, which provided vital and pertinent information that will allow the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, chaired by France, to work on appropriate recommendations for action.

We wish to note at the same time that it is important to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism itself for possible improvements in its operations. In this connection, the recent independent review of the mechanism, submitted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), has provided useful inputs, and we look forward to detailed work in the Working Group to consider and formulate concrete proposals that will further improve the practice of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. My Government appreciates the valuable contributions of the Working Group, especially with respect to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, which have been forwarded to the relevant parties for concrete action.

Japan, along with other Member States and partners, has advocated the concept of human security in order to enhance the protection and empowerment of men, women and children at the community and the individual level. As part of its efforts to implement that concept on the ground, we have put in place assistance programmes and projects in a number of regions and countries, particularly Asia and Africa. One important aspect of that assistance effort is the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. There is much more that should be done in this and other related areas, because assistance in these areas constitutes a key element of the protection of children in armed conflict, as well as of adult soldiers.

In his report, the Secretary-General calls upon donors to ensure that adequate resources and funding are made available for the purpose of assisting the rehabilitation and reintegration of children in armed conflict. Bearing in mind the concept of human security, my Government has supported the rehabilitation of former child soldiers, for example, in the Great Lakes region, through the relevant United Nations agencies.

In closing, my delegation wishes to stress once again that the issue of children and armed conflict should be a priority for the international community, and it is especially important to mainstream this issue into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. Japan is fully committed to engaging in the issue of children and armed conflict and will continue to work closely with other Member States, the United Nations system and national organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations and civil society.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting on children affected by armed conflicts. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF and Mr. Oling Olang, representing Save the Children, for their statements and for their dedication to children affected by armed conflict.

Let me also associate Denmark with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/826) is yet again deeply disturbing reading, and we fully support the recommendations contained therein. As we speak, thousands of children continue to be forcibly recruited to participate in the killings of innocent people, or are being killed themselves. Children are being raped or exposed to other kinds of grave sexual violence. Places where our children should feel safe, such as schools and hospitals, continue to be the targets of deliberate armed attacks and atrocities.

The report clearly demonstrates why the issue of children affected by armed conflicts is on the agenda of the Security Council. In the absence of direct and firm international involvement in the solution of this multifaceted problem, brutality and impunity will continue to reign.

For most of us, this conclusion is not a surprise. In all armed conflicts, children are the most vulnerable group and the first to be exposed to the violence, abuse and negative consequences of the general breakdown in society. However, the fundamental question is whether we — international society — just shrug our shoulders at the inevitability of these violations and turn our backs on the children in need, or whether we acknowledge our responsibility to protect those children.

Decisive action to improve the situation for children in armed conflict must make use of all of the relevant tools at our disposal. A solution to the problem can be reached only by taking a comprehensive approach, including legal, political and socio-economic measures. We need to take action against Governments and other parties that recruit or force children to become armed combatants. But we also need to be mindful of the close interlinkage between security and development, and address the underlying root causes to conflicts and their effects on children. Children affected by armed conflict must be provided with real alternatives to war.

It is clear to us that, over the past two years, the Council has made a resolute decision to actively engage in the protection of children in armed conflicts. In a much appreciated effort of cooperation between United Nations entities, Governments and civil society, the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children has been established in a number of conflict situations. We fully support and applaud those measures, which are indispensable stepping stones in the process. However, as we work to consolidate and improve our approach to ending abuses against children, it is obvious that further steps need to be taken in the foreseeable future to complete the established framework for child protection.

The scope of both the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Working Group must — as envisaged in resolution 1612 (2005) — be truly thematic in nature and cover all situations of concern, in particular those identified in the two annexes to the annual report of the Secretary-General.

Furthermore, the Security Council, in cooperation with the Secretary-General, must reinforce its efforts to engage in dialogue with all parties in armed conflicts that continue to violate the rights of children, so as to ensure an end to such practices. A particular focus for action should be the development of concrete and time-bound action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Finally, the Security Council must reaffirm its willingness to use all of the tools at its disposal and must not shy away from more difficult measures, such as sanctions, the referral of violators to international courts or stronger enforcement of peacekeeping mandates to protect children, if the gravity of the situation calls for them. In this regard, special attention should be paid to the 16 so-called persistent violators that have been named in each of the Secretary-General's annual reports listing parties that use child soldiers.

As we move ahead, we will undoubtedly be faced again and again with the arguments that either it is not proper for the Security Council to focus its attention on the rights of children, which should be dealt with by other United Nations bodies, or that the Security Council should not address the suffering of children in situations that are not on the agenda of the Council.

In both cases the criticism surely misses the point. The continued recruitment of child soldiers and the vicious violations and abuses perpetrated against children by parties to armed conflicts are at the heart of our efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Much more work needs to be done on this issue, but we have made a promising start. It is now of key importance that we follow through on our promises to children trapped by conflict. We will continue our efforts to ensure that this happens.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting today. I wish also to thank the Secretary-General and Special Representative Coomaraswamy, as well as UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman and the non-governmental organization representative for their statements this morning and for the report on children and armed conflict.

It is important that the United Nations, the Security Council and our Governments keep the issue of children and armed conflict in our focus, particularly in the light of the alarming estimate that some 300,000 children are today involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide.

The Secretary-General's report describes the terrible circumstances in which the use of child soldiers continues and highlights its current issues of concern: child victims in the Middle East and the Great Lakes region of Africa.

The United States fully supports the request for all parties listed in the annexes to the report to halt recruitment and use of child soldiers. We believe that the current plight of child soldiers is particularly dire in Burma, the Sudan and parts of the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda, where the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) operates.

According to some reports, Burma is thought to have the largest number of child soldiers in the world. Human Rights Watch has documented the widespread forced recruitment of boys as young as 11 by Burma's national army. Burma's military regime has acknowledged the recruitment of child soldiers and claims to have taken action against five officials involved in the forced recruitment of child soldiers since 2003 and to have set up a committee to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers.

Nonetheless, evidence continues to emerge that the practice of recruiting child soldiers has not ceased. A September 2006 report issued by the Thailand-based Human Rights Education Institute of Burma stated that little had changed with regard to Burma's forced recruitment of child soldiers and that the regime had done little to protect children from being recruited into the military. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers estimated that 20 per cent of the Burmese army and ethnic insurgency forces — about 90,000 persons — were under the age of 18. Child soldiers are also used in ethnic armies. We encourage Burma's neighbours to provide protection to any child soldiers who desert the national or ethnic armies and to allow international relief organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF, to provide humanitarian assistance to resettle and reintegrate them into society. The military forces of the Government of Burma also use the systematic rape of women and girls, particularly of the Shan, Karen, Karenni and other ethnic minorities, as an instrument of armed conflict.

The United States encourages Members, parties, States and international organizations to provide all appropriate protection and assistance to victims of such atrocities.

In the Sudan, Government forces and various armed groups continue to recruit and use child soldiers in armed conflict. In camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur and in refugee camps in neighbouring Chad, we have seen the tragic recruitment of young men and boys by various parties to the Darfur conflict. Also in Darfur, rape continues to be used as a weapon of war against young women and girls. The Government of the Sudan, which is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Right of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, must accept responsibility for the widespread problem of the recruitment and use of child soldiers and take immediate steps to halt such practices.

The current negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army seek an end to the 20-year conflict, which has produced 2 million internally displaced persons and seen roughly 25,000 children abducted by the LRA. Children abducted by the LRA are often forced to participate in acts of extreme violence, including beating or hacking to death fellow child captives who had tried to escape. Girls as young as 12 are given to commanders as "wives". Some abducted children have managed to escape, while others have died from disease, mistreatment or combat wounds. Although child abductions are down because of the decrease in LRA activity in northern Uganda, many of the abductees remain under the control of the LRA.

We also remain concerned about the sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeeping personnel, a problem again cited in the Secretary-General's report. We must redouble efforts to apprise refugees and IDPs of their rights to insist that all international organizations and non-governmental organizations adhere to a common code of conduct and to be vigilant in monitoring risk factors in order to end the exploitation of vulnerable persons which continues to take place in conflict and post-conflict settings. The United Nations must also increase its efforts to investigate and punish exploitation and abuse perpetrated by United Nations peacekeepers.

The United States fully supports the following measures: active monitoring of those Governments and armed groups that have already been named in the Secretary-General's report; direct dialogue involving the Governments and armed groups concerned in order to develop action plans to eliminate the use of child soldiers; and continuing efforts aimed at halting the sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable children.

The United States has contributed substantial resources to international programmes aimed at preventing the recruitment of children and at assisting the reintegration of child ex-combatants into the community. Since 2001 the United States has contributed more than $34 million to prevent the

recruitment of child combatants and towards their demobilization and reintegration.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report and are reviewing its specific recommendations closely. We look forward to working with other Council members on this important subject.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to express our deep gratitude to you for having convened this important meeting and for the outstanding work done by your delegation, which holds the presidency of the Council for this month. It is also my great pleasure to express our appreciation to the Government of France and to Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière, whose commitment to this issue is solid and praiseworthy. He has brought vigour and vitality to the deliberations of the Working Group.

I should like also to pay tribute to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her outstanding efforts. Indeed, her Office has undertaken various and commendable tasks. I should like also to commend Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Oling Olang of Save the Children for the efforts they are making in that respect.

The issue of children and armed conflict is now on the radar of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission as well as on the agenda of UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other key United Nations agencies and entities. This global focus is indeed heartening and encouraging, and concrete steps have been taken. We are acutely aware of the fact that this vital issue is one of unprecedented scope and depth.

We have raised the visibility of perpetrators. There now exist concrete and time-bound action plans to put an end to the recruitment of children and to ensure their release, as well as national legislations criminalizing the recruitment and use of child soldiers. There have also been initiatives aimed at ending the detention of and trafficking in children. Special attention has also been given to rape or other forms of serious sexual violence, especially against girls. We welcome all of those achievements. In that regard, we would like to commend UNICEF and the Special Representative for their persistent efforts to implement resolution 1612 (2005).

Although we are pleased at all those results and the progress made, we are not yet fully satisfied. I am confident that we all believe that more needs to be done. Thousands of children in many countries continue to be the victims of unspeakable atrocities, deplorable suffering and abhorrent violations. We certainly owe them all a better future.

The intense suffering of many of the world's children requires that we move beyond the question of child soldiers and address the nefarious violations that befall children of all categories and in different types of situations. In that connection, the plight of children in the Middle East, especially in occupied Palestinian territory and Lebanon, comes to mind, in particular because the dynamics of those situations are unique.

The State of Qatar is heartened by the strategic plan of the Office of the Special Representative, especially the rights-based approach to protection issues regarding children in armed conflict. We also applaud the various monitoring, reporting and compliance actions taken by the parties concerned. However, we firmly believe that, along with such steps, it is essential that there be an integrated approach that includes vital social and economic programmes. Reintegrating vulnerable groups of children requires paying serious attention to such issues as the generation of jobs, the provision of skills training, access to education and health care.

There is also a need for a stronger collaborative relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission, in particular with respect to addressing needs regarding the protection of children, demobilization and reintegration within the overall context of peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations. We also need to develop and expand a stronger partnership with international and regional organizations working on the protection of children and armed conflict.

Mr. Matulay (Slovakia): First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and his personal engagement in this important issue. I would also like to thank the Peruvian presidency for organizing this debate on the recently released report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826). Slovakia is also grateful to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as to Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their tireless work on behalf

of children affected by armed conflict around the world and for their participation in our meeting today.

As Slovakia fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, I will limit myself to a few additional remarks.

Slovakia supports the full implementation of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, in particular resolution 1612 (2005), which was adopted a year ago, making a significant milestone in the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

We welcome the new report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, as well as the recommendations it contains. The report reflects the progress made and points to new situations that have emerged since the 2005 report.

Yesterday's Arria formula meeting with the representatives of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, the International Save the Children Alliance and the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, which was organized by the Permanent Mission of France, gave us another excellent opportunity to hear additional information and many valuable recommendations from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are active on the frontlines. We very much appreciate the work done by NGOs. We fully support the idea of a close partnership between the United Nations Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict and NGOs.

Slovakia welcomes the reported progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the development and implementation of action plans and the information on the activities of child protection advisers of United Nations peacekeeping missions. Thousands of children associated with armed groups and affected by armed conflict have benefited from various disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and have managed to return to their communities and schools. That progress has been made possible through the effective and pragmatic approach of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, NGOs and other important actors on the ground.

Unfortunately, even with all the attention being paid by the international community to the protection of the rights of children, we are still witnessing the killing and maiming of children, acts of rape and other sexual exploitation, abductions, the denial of humanitarian access to children, the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other gross violations of children's rights in many of the situations reported on in the Secretary-General's report of 2005. Furthermore, new conflict situations have arisen in which a great deal of effort has to be made to prevent children from being victimized and to minimize human rights violations.

Despite improved communication and cooperation with Governments of countries in conflict situations, in many cases United Nations and other humanitarian personnel continue to face difficulties in securing safe and unhindered access. With respect to any national activity carried out by countries in situations of concern, there is a prerequisite to cooperate with United Nations bodies — in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, country-level monitoring and reporting task force teams, peacekeeping missions and United Nations country teams — as well as with regional and non-governmental organizations, in order to achieve progress in ending the recruitment and use of children by armed groups.

Impunity for crimes against children is unacceptable; national judicial authorities have the primary responsibility to bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice. However, with regard to situations of armed conflict in which national judicial authorities are not fully capable of coping with crimes against children, Slovakia endorses the continuation of the active engagement of the International Criminal Court.

Both annexes of the Secretary General's latest report list many parties to conflict — often the same ones as in previous annual reports — who have notoriously disregarded appeals of the international community and have continued to recruit child soldiers. In that connection, we believe that in some cases effective targeted measures by the international community against parties to armed conflict who continue to use child combatants or to commit other crimes against children in armed conflict could lead to a change in the behaviour of notorious violators.

In conclusion, I would like to express our serious concern about the information regarding the possible involvement of United Nations peacekeeping personnel in the sexual exploitation of children in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo. Preventing sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel remains a crucial issue in the endeavour by the United Nations to protect children affected by armed conflict. We fully support a policy of zero-tolerance in respect of crimes committed by United Nations personnel. We therefore hope that the investigation into allegations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will by duly conducted and that offenders will not go unpunished. We believe that appropriate training of peacekeeping forces clearly has a positive effect on the behaviour and actual conduct of troops as they carry out their duties. This issue needs to be properly addressed as plans for security-sector reform are carried out.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru. We are honoured to have him preside over today's debate, the subject of which is of great importance to our country.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on this matter (S/2006/826). We support his recommendations. We would also like to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their presentations and for the fundamental role they play in this subject. We also thank Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang, representative of Save the Children, for the valuable work of his organization.

The adoption last year of resolution 1612 (2005) provided the Security Council with a set of useful tools to advance in the implementation of concrete measures to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict. Today, in reading the report of the Secretary-General on the reality being lived by those children, we cannot fail to express our concern about the obstacles in the way of solving this serious problem. Many children are still being recruited as combatants by organizations or parties to situations of armed conflict under consideration by the Security Council, such as in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia and parts of the Sudan. Other girls and boys continue to be victims of sexual violence, such as in northern Uganda, and many have died as a result of the bombing of civilian populations, schools and hospitals in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. Others are kidnapped with different objectives, and many others, sadly, will die due to unexploded ordinance.

We must recognize the need to strengthen the current system by providing it with adequate means to make it more effective, and to redouble our political commitment to finding remedies for the victims and to ending the impunity of the perpetrators. At the same time, we are aware that we are in the early phases of a complex and long-term process that moves slowly and that seeks to ensure the participation of all parties concerned.

In reading the Secretary-General's report in the light of resolution 1612 (2005), we can identify several elements that we believe require more focused attention.

First, the monitoring and reporting mechanism could be improved. To that end, we think that the Working Group should devote a session to thoroughly studying the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which carried out the independent review of the mechanism, in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005). We also believe that the time has come for members of the Security Council to consider the possibility of broadening the scope of the mechanism in order to ensure the equal treatment of all conflict situations in which children are victims of violations or abuses. We further believe that all violations are of equal gravity and that the mechanism should attach the same priority to all of them.

Second, concerned States and parties to a conflict must be even more deeply involved in dialogue processes with the relevant United Nations entities and that, as a result of that dynamic, they should engage in a process of drafting and implementing national action plans, as requested by resolution 1539 (2004).

Third, it is critical to ensure the continuous and predictable flow of resources for the implementation of both the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the national action plans. It is necessary to translate political will into significant resources and to increase accountability for those resources.

Fourth, we believe that the issue of resources is closely linked to the training of staff in charge of implementing the mechanism, both at the local level and at the level of United Nations agencies with competence in that matter. At the same time, we feel that an adequate influx of resources would allow the

continuation of ongoing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and the implementation of new programmes in areas where they have not yet been developed. It is especially necessary to emphasize the rehabilitation phase and the reintegration of children into their families and communities, thus ensuring a sense of belonging. It is also necessary to bear in mind the special needs of girls in that process.

Fifth, interaction with civil society is essential at all levels. We thank France for organizing an Arria formula meeting, with the participation of members of civil society working on the situation of children in armed conflict, both at Headquarters and in the field. Having heard from the representatives of those organizations, we believe that it is necessary to ensure greater interaction with them at both levels.

Sixth, although the monitoring and reporting mechanism focuses on the collection of trustworthy data on the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other abuses against children affected by armed conflict, we must not overlook the fact that the ultimate goal of the process must be to identify those responsible for such violations, such as Charles Taylor, in order to take steps against them, thus putting an end to the climate of impunity that allows such atrocities to continue to be committed. In that context, I reaffirm the need to support the work of the International Criminal Court.

Seventh, we must not forget that the issue of children and armed conflict is linked to other subjects, such as the need to achieve gender parity, the empowerment of women and girls, the fight against impunity, the protection of civilians in conflict, and the economic development of conflict-affected societies.

Eighth, we believe that, in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005), the information collected as a result of the application of the monitoring and reporting mechanism may be transmitted not only to the Security Council, but also to the General Assembly and to other organs of the system with competence in those matters, such as the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the sanctions committees. It is important to stress that the Security Council's Group of Experts is working to that end.

The Security Council Working Group created under resolution 1612 (2005) met to consider specific country situations and adopted recommendations for the first cases considered. That working method has allowed better interaction with the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF and the affected countries; better knowledge of the cases under consideration; and, above all, improved continuity in the Security Council's consideration of the situation of children and armed conflict. The Working Group is fully aware that there is no single solution with respect to this issue and that the particularities of each case must be taken into account before concrete recommendations can be formulated.

Argentina does not favour a policy of naming and shaming, but we believe that the gravity of the situation merits concrete steps to stop the misconduct of some parties or organizations in conflict that have long committed grave abuses against children. From that perspective, we believe that it is effective to list the responsible parties in the report of the Secretary-General, and we would like the Working Group to move ahead in its consideration of recommending sanctions against those parties where there is certain evidence that such violations have been committed against children in conflict. We cannot continue to be indifferent when children remain subject to grave abuses.

Another subject of concern to us is the denial of humanitarian help to children. Lack of access to affected areas and the insecurity faced on many occasions by United Nations personnel during conflicts negatively affects access to information on recruiting practices and other grave violations committed against children. We call upon all parties to conflicts to permit secure access for personnel charged with providing humanitarian assistance and protection to children.

Finally, my delegation would like to reiterate its concern that a subject of this magnitude not be confined to action by the Security Council. It must take on broader dimensions through growing involvement of the States members of the General Assembly. In this sense, we urge all members of the General Assembly to welcome Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and to commit themselves to collaborate in its implementation.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, your personal presence here as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru to guide the Security Council's deliberations bears witness to the importance

that your country attaches to the topic that brings us here today: children and armed conflict. We can thus only thank you for having come.

In the short span of three months, the Security Council is now holding its second debate on this matter of great concern. This clearly shows how interested this body is in the situation of children affected by conflict throughout the world. I take this opportunity, first of all, to welcome the sixth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826) and to convey our appreciation for the already palpable results of the activities undertaken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. We are grateful to her for her illuminating briefing to the Council on the situation of children, not only in countries figuring on the Council's agenda, but also in other situations of concern.

I cannot fail to mention the extremely important role of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations system specialized agency that has always played its part in helping children. I would like to convey our great thanks to Ms. Ann M. Veneman, its Executive Director. Nor can we can fail to pay tribute to the non-governmental organizations for their untiring efforts in the field to defend children, as Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang of Save the Children has described today.

It is with genuine interest that my delegation read the report of the Secretary-General. My country, having experienced recurring civil wars, understands the full scope of the consequences of armed conflict on the vulnerable group of children, for whom the right to protection is a universal legal requirement — just as they have a natural right to life and all the care that that involves.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that in the context of the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), monitoring and reporting mechanisms are being created in a growing number of countries. That was made possible thanks to cooperation between the United Nations and Member States, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations. The progress achieved in the first phase of implementation of this mechanism in the seven priority situations — Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, the Sudan, Nepal and Sri Lanka — is encouraging, despite the excessive spread of conflict situations, which in Africa has increased the likelihood of abuses involving children.

In that connection, in 1990 our continent adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child as a common position at a time when the World Summit for Children was convened here in New York, and following the General Assembly's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25).

A periodic assessment of developments in these situations and the progressive extension of the mechanism to other situations is therefore necessary. The difficulties encountered in implementing this initiative must be overcome. I am referring, inter alia, to those related to access by personnel of the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations; a clear distribution of tasks among the United Nations and outside partners; an understanding of the role of child protection specialists within United Nations entities; and making resources available for the implementation of long-term intervention programmes for children affected by conflict.

These mechanisms are the first link in a chain and the starting point of a process, the purpose of which should be the crafting and implementation of action plans with target dates to prevent or put an end to the recruitment and use of children as well as other violations against children in situations of armed conflict or post-conflict situations.

My delegation notes that here, despite progress by certain States that have committed themselves by taking concrete measures for the implementation of national action plans, much remains to be done. But we can welcome certain cases, like that of Côte d'Ivoire, where we see an actual example of children being handed over, once demobilized, to UNICEF, and a prohibition of recruitment into armed forces or groups.

We therefore encourage other Governments not to remain at the stage of mere commitments, but to ensure that those commitments are met without further delay through the adoption of concrete measures to prevent or put an end to child recruitment, if necessary, considering sanctions against recalcitrant perpetrators of those criminal practices.

The same applies to sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel of the United Nations. It is regrettable that, despite all the efforts made, such

abuses continue to come to light. My delegation reaffirms its commitment to the zero-tolerance policy advocated by the Secretary-General in his report following the 2005 World Summit.

Turning to experience acquired in terms of child protection, we can now take note of the importance of the role of child protection specialists in two main areas: data collection for the purpose of monitoring and reporting of information; and ensuring the mainstreaming of child protection issues in peacekeeping missions, through training programmes. But improvements are needed in order to ensure that the efforts of child protection specialists are effective, and to enhance the overall impact of their activities.

My country remains devoted to the concept of the responsibility to protect, enshrined at the September 2005 World Summit. We support the recommendations of the Secretary-General, for instance, when he suggests that the Security Council give equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern and, in addition to the issue of the recruitment and use of children, to attach the same importance to other types of grave violations, such as murder, maiming, rape and other serious sexual abuses, kidnapping and so forth.

We believe that particular attention should be focused on Darfur to ensure that the parties, whether or not they have signed the Peace Agreement, understand their obligation to spare children and undertake concrete commitments to that end. We expect the same from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, as a logical consequence of a crisis in which children have suffered an ordeal that they should never have had any connection with, either as involuntary participants or as innocent victims.

Turning to the international community, what the national Governments and the United Nations and its partners must do is to ensure the availability of sufficient resources and financing for the successful reintegration and rehabilitation of all children associated with conflict, to craft relevant and effective initiatives to support such efforts in order to make sure of their success and long-term viability.

Finally, we can only reiterate to the Members of our international Organization that are party to the relevant international or regional conventions the need to secure a safer and more peaceful world for tomorrow that will not allow itself to associate children — the hope of humanity — with morally reprehensible initiatives. Like a mirror that magnifies both the good and the bad practices of adults, children will reflect only what they themselves have experienced in these conflict situations.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the French delegation, not only for what it has done at the head of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts, but also for having drafted the presidential statement, which we unreservedly support.

Mr. Yankey (Ghana): Mr. President, it is my pleasure to acknowledge your presence here as the Foreign Minister of Peru, and to thank your delegation for organizing this debate. May I also express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative and to the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of Save the Children for their contributions to this debate.

We very much welcome the opportunity to participate in another discussion on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, a practice that should be denounced for its devastating and far-reaching social consequences. It is bad enough that rebel groups frequently recruit children to fight their cause, but it becomes deeply disturbing when Governments, which have the responsibility to protect their own citizens, are caught indulging in this criminal enterprise.

As a signatory to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which has been in force since November 1999, Ghana is keenly aware of the enormous challenges faced by African countries in their endeavour to end all violations of the rights and dignity of children and to extend to them the protection they so desperately deserve. We believe cooperation could be enhanced between the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the United Nations, as well as the relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs), so as to complement each other's efforts in the area of child protection.

In fact, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is mandated, among other things, to collect and document information, commission interdisciplinary assessment of situations on African problems in the fields of the rights and welfare of the child and also to cooperate with other African, international and regional institutions and

organizations concerned with the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child.

It is for these reasons that we attach great importance to the findings and recommendations in both the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and the independent review of the monitoring and reporting mechanism for children and armed conflict progress.

In particular, State parties must have the political will and commitment to strengthen measures to prevent recruitment of children for armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities, particularly by signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. More importantly, all concerned must enact legislation clearly forbidding the recruitment of under-age children — those under 15 years of age — into armed forces and groups and their direct participation in hostilities.

Let us also bear in mind that actions plans can be meaningful and effective only when they are rooted in realism, in terms of both the required resources and the capacity to deliver, plus a genuine commitment to the underlying objectives. Without that, all our efforts will come to naught.

We recognize that information constitutes the greatest weapon in the whole enterprise of redressing the negative impact of armed conflict on children. Consequently, the role of the monitoring and reporting mechanism cannot be overstated, and everything must be done to strengthen its overall resource base and capabilities. As the report rightly notes, action is required in that respect, at both the national and international levels, to mobilize the necessary resources and enhance the capacity to gather first-hand information in the field for use by the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

We welcome the progress that has been made by the monitoring and reporting mechanism in extending its reach by building the necessary linkages with a range of important actors, such as various United Nations agencies, national authorities and NGOs. For its part, the Security Council, through its Working Group, must continue to pay close attention to the mechanism and extend to it every support in meeting the challenges ahead, not least the elimination of the conditions in which the abuse of children flourishes.

Mr. Rogachev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Secretary-General and to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Veneman and the non-governmental organization (NGO) representative Mr. Oling Olang for their attention to the problems of protection of children in armed conflict and for the useful information they have provided on the state of affairs in this area.

We are pleased to note the clear progress made in this area, which has already been referred to sufficiently here. At the same time, there is ample room for enhancing the effectiveness of efforts of the entities that are involved in this endeavour. The issue of the rights of children in conflicts and in post-conflict situations has occupied a solid place in the work not only of the Security Council, which has been dealing with this issue on the basis of the broader context of its primary responsibilities — maintaining international peace and security — but also the work of the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. A new impetus to the efforts to the international community in this area came from resolution 1612 (2005). In this regard, making this work system-wide, on the condition that there be a rational division of labour among United Nations structures in accordance with their mandates, continues to be a pressing task.

We studied the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/826) with great interest. We note its focus on practical aspects and the fact that it contains a great deal of information. Nevertheless, we should note that, as in the past, it does not always reflect reliable or verified information, and the frequently anonymous sources of information are not examples of objectivity or reliability. More considered assessments would only serve our cause, since this would raise confidence not only in the information but also in the recommendations that the report contains. With respect to those recommendations, the one that stands out is the proposal to ensure that the Security Council give equal attention to all situations of concern and also to all grave violations of the rights of children affected by armed conflict. We support the notion of the need to give equal weight to all grave violations, including not only the use of child soldiers, but also the other five categories of violation. Implementing that would alter the basis on which the reports on that issue are prepared, including with respect to the compilation of lists of violating parties. That is also referred to in the

report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The proposal to give equal care and attention to all situations must be clarified. It needs to be determined whether that concerns the lists in the annex to the relevant report of the Secretary-General, or whether it concerns all conflict situations worldwide.

We are certain that from the standpoint of the tasks of the Security Council under the Charter, its focus should, above all go to the most acute and large-scale armed conflicts on its agenda, and not only those in Africa. That does not mean that the situation of children in other conflict areas would go without the attention of the United Nations. There is an entire range of bodies authorized to protect the rights of children and to fight against the impunity of the perpetrators of violations.

In that context, we wish to turn to the activities of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Security Council Working Group, whose establishment has been a turning point in the practical implementation of the decisions of the Council in the area of the protection of children. The monitoring and reporting mechanism must be implemented in strict compliance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). After all, the resolution provides that it be established as a priority in situations under consideration by the Council, which would make it possible to more fully and effectively make use of the capacities of the Security Council.

In that connection, it is important that the information provided by the mechanism be objective, up-to-date, accurate and reliable. The monitoring and reporting mechanism itself needs to function with the involvement of national Governments supporting and complementing their measures to ensure the protection and rehabilitation of children. That is required by resolution 1612 (2005).

In the arrangement associating the monitoring and reporting mechanism with the Security Council, the key role is played by the Security Council Working Group, which is designed to prepare balanced recommendations to improve the situation of children in specific situations. We believe that the plan of action of that new body for 2007 will be geared to country subjects already before the Council, while the Group will continue to work in a spirit of cooperation emphasizing constructive measures.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express the hope that the comprehensive system-wide efforts of the Organization, in cooperation with interested States and civil society, will remedy the dire situation of children in armed conflict.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): We welcome you to New York to chair this session of the Security Council on children and armed conflict. My delegation is grateful to the delegation of Peru for organizing this important debate. It gives us another opportunity to deliberate on progress made in the protection of children in armed conflict since our last debate in July this year.

We pay special tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and the Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman, for their professional, dedicated efforts in saving and protecting children from abuse. We also welcome the passionate statement by Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang on behalf of Save the Children. We received with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/826) and the additional report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), both of which are comprehensive, analytical and excellent in quality.

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which established a Security Council working group and a monitoring and reporting mechanism, remarkable progress has been made. We owe the French delegation, especially Ambassador de la Sablière, our gratitude for having worked tirelessly in guiding and leading the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. As of now, the Working Group has examined four country specific reports and made recommendations on two of them. At the same time, the monitoring and reporting mechanism is now operational in several countries.

However, while we are proud of what has been accomplished in setting standards and implementation mechanisms for resolution 1612 (2005), the same cannot be said about the actual situation on the ground in most areas where violations against children have been documented and continue to be committed on a daily basis. The report of the Secretary-General has cited many incidents where children are still being recruited as child soldiers, abducted, sexually abused, killed, maimed and denied humanitarian access. Of more concern and worry are the new phenomena

mentioned in the report about children being recruited as mercenaries or used in suicide bombings. An equally disturbing trend is the migration within regions of recruitment and use of child soldiers. This will require a regional approach in strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, in general, and in respecting child combatants and ex-combatants in particular.

Tanzania reiterates its grave concern for the continued violations of children's rights by both State and non-State actors. We are grateful to UNICEF, other United Nations entities and NGOs, which are working diligently to assist Governments concerned in the rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict and in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism set out by resolution 1612 (2005). We also commend the Governments of Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sri Lanka, which are increasingly willing to work with United Nations country teams in developing action plans.

We welcome and encourage the military wing of the rebel group Forces nouvelles and four militia groups in Côte d'Ivoire for the signing of a regional action plan to end the recruitment of children and to implement the plan. We urge other countries and armed groups mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General to make similar commitments.

In our region of the Great Lakes, the problem of recruiting and using child soldiers has persisted for a long time but has, of late, subsided with the signing and implementation of peace agreements. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers is a major challenge that requires a comprehensive strategy, resources and political commitment to address it. That is one of the issues to be addressed in the forthcoming summit in Nairobi next month of the countries of the Great Lakes region.

Tanzania fully supports the recommendations contained in the reports of the Secretary-General and the OIOS. However, we would like to emphasize three issues: first, we agree to the suggestion that the Council expand its focus and allow equal attention to both situations of armed conflict and situations of concern, so that a monitoring and reporting mechanism can apply to all situations regardless of whether they fall under annex I or II of resolution 1612 (2005). In that regard, we welcome the fact that the Secretary-General has included all situations of concern in his report.

Secondly, we recognize the difficulties encountered in the monitoring and reporting mechanism, ranging from policy coherence to problems of collecting data owing to terrain, security situation and inadequate manpower. However, while we continue to work around those challenges, we must in the meantime take action against individuals who have been identified as perpetrators and for whom arrest warrants have been issued. In addition to the "naming and shaming" list, threats of sanctions will definitely have a deterrent effect on those violating children's rights.

Thirdly — and this is related to my second point — we urge that more resources be allocated to ensure that the monitoring and reporting mechanism is effective and that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are successful. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations agencies charged with protecting and helping children, as well as NGOs with similar mandates, must coordinate their efforts. Those organizations must harmonize their policies and plans of action in order to have the maximum impact in their work in the field. They must be given adequate resources, both financial and human, to carry out their mandates. We call upon the international community, including the Security Council, to step up efforts to that end.

Finally, we look forward to further progress on the ground and in New York in advancing the cause of children. We hope that Governments that have committed themselves to action plans will implement them and that those that have not yet committed themselves in that regard will do so. We welcome the energetic approach shown by the visits of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and that of her Special Adviser, and we have every confidence that the Security Council Working Group will continue to study their reports and to make credible recommendations.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): You are particularly welcome, Mr. President. Your presence and that of the Secretary-General emphasize the importance of this subject.

I would like to thank the speakers for their presentations and to align myself with the statement to be delivered later by the presidency of the European Union.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Special Representative, Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her Office, to Ann Veneman and UNICEF, and to the other United Nations agencies involved, together with civil society organizations such as Save the Children and the work that it does. Their unstinting and committed work on this agenda is inspiring and altogether necessary.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/826) is a sobering read and clearly demonstrates that there are significant challenges ahead if the international community is to turn the existing momentum into widespread progress on the ground, where it matters. The United Kingdom is concerned that the use of child soldiers appears increasingly to be crossing borders and migrating within regions. We need to look for ways to refine existing strategies for demobilizing, rehabilitating and reintegrating children who are associated with armed groups. The particular needs of girls must be fully reflected in such strategies.

We would also like to see further development of the useful monitoring and reporting mechanism. The report on the mechanism by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, to which a number of my colleagues have alluded, made some important recommendations, which the Working Group should now take forward.

Over the past decade, the international community has played a crucial role in highlighting the issue of children and armed conflict and in developing a framework within which these issues can be addressed. We should build on that progress. With that in mind, the United Kingdom supports the Special Representative's proposal to undertake a strategic review of the agenda on children and armed conflict. We also welcome the way in which some parties to armed conflicts have taken steps towards tackling these problems.

But much more needs to be done. Parties involved in armed conflicts must quickly develop and implement action plans to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers. They must facilitate the process of information-gathering for the monitoring and reporting mechanism. They should make every effort to assist the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers. The international community must stand ready to help them do so. A systematic approach, coordinated among all members of the United Nations family, is needed to implement action in individual theatres, including, where relevant, the dimension of resolution 1325 (2000) that applies to girls.

But where progress in developing action plans or in facilitating the operation of the monitoring and reporting system is found to be inadequate, the international community must be prepared to consider taking action against the parties involved. Those individuals who commit egregious violations against children must be held to account. The Security Council has an important role to play in that respect.

One specific case this morning requires urgent attention. The complaints about very serious incidents in Sri Lanka need to be addressed and due legal process applied. Ambassador Rock's presentation to the Working Group will be an important step.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm that the United Kingdom remains committed to playing a full and active role in the Council and its Working Group. I pay tribute in particular to Ambassador De La Sablière for his contribution. All of us here have a collective obligation to bring an end to the suffering that children in armed conflicts face around the world today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru.

I wish to begin by thanking the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Ms. Ann Veneman and Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang, whose statements this morning helped to illustrate this debate.

It is particularly satisfying to take the floor as President of the Security Council, which is the principal body of the international system for maintaining peace and security. My presence in this forum as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru is, above all, a tangible expression of my country's commitment to multilateralism. It is the most appropriate forum for developing countries to participate in discussions and in the quest for mechanisms to face the grave new challenges facing the world today.

Those challenges arise from unfinished nation-building processes, terrorism, the threat of nuclear proliferation and certain contradictory trends in the current international system. Indeed, while the world is integrating in global terms, disparities are growing, not only among countries, but also within States themselves, generating conflicts that are not always resolved by peaceful means.

Thus, paradoxically, the number of conflicts of an essentially domestic nature has increased on the Council's current agenda. In general, the origins of such conflicts are found in widespread situations of exclusion, instability and vulnerability, which too often lead to scenes of humanitarian crisis requiring urgent action by the international community.

We do not believe that such conflicts can be dealt with exclusively from a traditional security perspective. We need an approach that takes into account not only the political, institutional and military aspects, but also other structural factors that cause exclusion, such as poverty, environmental degradation and the loss of values.

In that context, I wish to emphasize that Peru is developing domestic policies to fight exclusion. We are convinced that the surest way to guarantee peace and democratic governance is to reduce disparities and poverty and to create opportunities through education and economic inclusion. That also requires the strengthening of a culture of duty based on the norms that constitute the rule of law.

Therefore, we welcome the fact that the Security Council, in addition to the decisions swiftly adopted with regard to the conflict situations under its consideration, is seeking to deal in a similarly efficient manner with certain aspects common to them. The issue of the impact of armed conflicts on children is a remarkable example of the effort of the Council in this regard.

My country has consistently and forcefully condemned all acts of violence and abuse against children in situations of armed conflict. They are a flagrant violation of humanitarian international law. We are particularly pleased, therefore, that this debate is being held during the presidency of Peru.

On this occasion, we have before us the sixth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826), and I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for that document. The report provides us with valuable information for assessing to what extent States and non-State actors have been complying with their obligations under the regime established by the Security Council to deal with the serious abuses committed against children in armed conflicts, including killing or maiming children, recruiting or using child soldiers, attacking schools and hospitals, child rape or other grave acts of sexual violence against children, the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian assistance to them.

In this regard, we welcome the progress achieved in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism relating to children in armed conflicts. In addition, we congratulate all the States that have made significant efforts to implement the regime established by the decisions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 1612 (2005). However, a great deal remains to be done, given the fact that, unfortunately, many children are deprived of their basic rights in the context of the armed conflicts currently under way. We therefore believe that the Security Council, if it is to fulfil its responsibilities in an effective manner, must focus on adopting specific measures aimed at fully implementing existing laws, rather than elaborating additional standards.

The establishment of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is a significant step in the right direction. We commend the work of the Group, under the chairmanship of the representative of France, Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière, who contributed significantly to the organization of this debate, for which I am very grateful.

We believe that the Council must continue to take into account the Working Group's recommendations. By the same token, we also commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, including her activities in the field in situations of armed conflict, which deserve our full support. The same can be said of the important work being carried out by UNICEF and other relevant institutions. We call upon the parties to armed conflict to cooperate with all of those organizations. We also urge the donor community to support efforts to reintegrate and demobilize child soldiers — a process that is currently under way in certain countries. That is a way in which donors can show their true commitment.

There is no doubt that the task ahead is extraordinarily important, because there is no better way to prevent conflicts than by providing the children of today with the conditions conducive to their becoming men and women of peace in the future. We must spare no effort in facing this challenge.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Liechtenstein, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ritter (Liechtenstein): Last week the international community observed Universal Children's Day. Meanwhile, millions of children affected by armed conflict continue to suffer in many parts of the world. Addressing the extreme hardship of children affected by armed conflict in this open debate of the Security Council is therefore both a timely and very important initiative, for which we would like to commend the presidency of the Council.

We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her great dedication and full commitment to bringing this agenda forward and for contributing to tangible progress towards the era of application of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005). Full implementation of that resolution will depend, to a very large extent, on political will. Council members, in particular the permanent members, have a special responsibility to show the necessary leadership in effectively ending impunity for all grave violations of children's rights in all armed conflicts. Targeted sanctions by the Security Council will have to be complemented by the work undertaken by the International Criminal Court and by national courts in bringing the perpetrators and instigators of such violations to justice.

Resolution 1612 (2005) established the monitoring and reporting mechanism as an essential basis for the activities of the Working Group of the Council on Children and Armed Conflict. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Working Group, as well as all actors involved in the operation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, for their efforts and commitment to help children affected by armed conflict. The independent review carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services acknowledges the important function of the mechanism in drawing attention to issues relating to children and armed conflict at the local, national and international levels. At the same time, we concur with the assessment that there is a need to clarify the intended use of the information gathered through the mechanism, in particular by identifying how it can service the information needs of various destinations for action in an efficient and effective way. This includes the gathering of information for key destinations that advance the ending of impunity, as well as in the areas of child protection and victim assistance.

While recognizing that a comprehensive approach encompassing all of those aspects of the children and armed conflict agenda may be difficult to realize in certain places and circumstances, we wish to stress that the full use of the potential of the monitoring and reporting mechanism is in the interests of all actors involved — Governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and civil society — as much as it is to the benefit of the children concerned.

Enhancing the potential of the monitoring and reporting mechanism also entails the extension of its scope to all six categories of grave violations of children's rights. Equally important is the inclusion of all relevant conflict situations on equal terms. It is, in fact, difficult to understand how a differential treatment of grave violations of children's rights in various conflicts would be compatible with the universality of human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law. Political considerations must not override the fundamental rules of protection for the most vulnerable members of society.

Liechtenstein has been actively involved in the development of United Nations mechanisms to address the plight of children affected by armed conflict since their inception. We will continue to do so as a member of the Group of Friends of children affected by armed conflict, and are therefore looking forward to the 10-year review of the Graça Machel report. At the same time, we wish to stress that the United Nations, 10 years after the publication of the report, is lagging behind, given the high expectations in terms of its ability to alleviate the hardship of millions of children in armed conflict. The Security Council is best placed to change this public perception.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Finland, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the pleasure of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU). Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Iceland, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

The European Union attaches great importance to the issue of children and armed conflict and I thank

you, Sir, for having given me the opportunity to participate in this discussion today. I would also like to thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary General, for her briefing, as well as for her excellent report.

Despite the almost universal ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, millions of children continue to have their human rights violated and to suffer in situations of armed conflict. Every day children are killed, maimed, abducted or recruited as child soldiers, become the victims of rape or other grave acts of sexual violence, or suffer as a result of attacks against schools and hospitals that prevent them from enjoying their right to education and health care. Also, because of the denial of humanitarian access, children in conflict areas are deprived of their right to survival and development, to food, water and medication.

Children in armed conflicts suffer from physical, emotional and social problems. In addition to the suffering of children and families affected by armed conflict, the development of society as a whole suffers when its children are denied a safe childhood. No society can afford to put its children at risk; nor can the international community.

Ten years ago, Graça Machel, in her report, laid the foundation for putting the issue of children and armed conflict on the international agenda. The important resolution 1612 (2005) came five years after the first resolution on children and armed conflict was adopted in the Security Council. During those five years, important steps were taken to improve the situation, but it also became clear that further efforts and better-coordinated actions were required. The EU therefore warmly welcomes the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the setting up of the Security Council Working Group which resulted from resolution 1612 (2005).

As stated in the report, there have been both negative and positive developments in the past year. The escalation of violence in the Middle East has cost several hundred children their lives, and thousands more have suffered other serious grievances. The conflict in Sri Lanka has escalated, and children have been recruited by both the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the so-called Karuna faction. In Somalia, a long period without a central government has left the majority of children without an opportunity to get even a basic education, and humanitarian access in some parts of the country has been seriously hampered. Various armed forces and groups in the Sudan use children for military purposes, and in Darfur many girls are victims of ethnically targeted sexual violence. A serious development is the "migration" of recruitment and the use of child soldiers within regions, such as, for example, the Mano River and Great Lakes region in Africa. A way must be found to stop rebel groups from preying upon children and recruiting them.

The report provides important recommendations. All grave violations of human rights and international law suffered by children in all conflict situations should receive equal attention. Killing and maiming, abduction, recruiting, rape and other grave sexual violations, attacks against schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access to children all are grave violations that seriously affect the future of those children that are forced to live in situations of armed conflict. The reporting mechanism should also address all relevant situations in equal terms.

The European Union also stresses the need to recognize gender-based issues in the drawing up of peace agreements, the assignment of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, and in the planning of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. The report underlines the need to recognize the special concerns of girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups. Rape and grave sexual violence against children is a particularly severe violation of their rights and can constitute a war crime, genocide or a crime against humanity. Impunity must never be allowed in such cases, and child victims need to be able to seek meaningful redress and compensation through child- friendly mechanisms.

The sustainability of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes can be enhanced by supporting national initiatives and by encouraging national ownership of the programmes, but adequate international funding must be ensured so that it is available for the rehabilitation and reintegration of all children that have been associated with armed forces.

The report encourages States to strengthen national and international measures against the recruitment of children, particularly by ratifying and implementing the Optional Protocol to the Convention

on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The European Union also urges those States that have not yet done so to ratify and fully implement the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which classifies enlisting children under the age of 15 as a war crime.

The European Union is proceeding with the mainstreaming of children's rights into its advocacy, policies and programmes. The EU has continued its efforts towards the implementation of its plan of action relative to its Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. Cooperation with the relevant stakeholders is ongoing, and the EU continues to monitor the situation of children in armed conflict.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict for its work. The EU continues actively to support and work closely with the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other actors, including non-governmental organizations, and thanks all those actors for their efforts to protect children and children's rights in armed conflict situations. We would like also to underline the importance of briefings such as this one by the Special Representative to the Security Council, as well as to other relevant United Nations bodies such as the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

We welcome the 10-year review of the Graça Machel report, which will provide us with an opportunity to assess the situation of children and armed conflict and highlight the challenges ahead. There is a need for in-depth and more systematic research relating to different issues relative to children and armed conflict.

Since the publication of the Graça Machel report, much has been achieved. Monitoring of and reporting on the situation of children in armed conflict have improved. While some parties are making real progress in protecting children from grave violations in situations of armed conflict, others continue to violate the rights of the most vulnerable — the children. There is therefore a need for the international community to proceed from monitoring and reporting to response. The Security Council should call on parties to follow up on its strong call for parties to prepare concrete, time-bound action plans. The Security Council should also consider measures against parties that systematically commit grave violations of children's rights.

Failure to protect children's rights in situations of armed conflict undermines the ability of children to develop and to participate in society. It also poses the risk of intensifying discrimination and exclusion and of making children's needs invisible. The European Union is working actively to protect and enhance children's rights during armed conflicts as well. However, the most important protective factor for children, their rights and their healthy development is peace and non-violent solutions to conflict, to which the European Union is fully committed.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express my honour and pleasure at seeing you, Mr. José Antonio García Belaunde, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru, presiding over the work of the Security Council on this very important and sensitive issue. Your presence adds value and prestige to the excellent work being done by the Peruvian presidency.

I would like to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her work on this issue since her appointment earlier this year. I would also like to thank Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang, the representative of Save the Children.

Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the issue, which covers situations of serious concern and takes note of the progress being made towards the "era of application" in the handling of the issue of children and armed conflict.

We are pleased to observe that progress has been made in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), in particular with regard to establishing the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the seven situations that were designated as priorities for the first phase. We understand the difficulties and challenges inherent in such a complex, multi-stakeholder initiative. We remain convinced, however, that no effort must be spared in achieving adequate coordination between all the relevant entities of the United Nations system that can contribute to the implementation of the mechanism. We believe that could make it possible to

provide reliable, accurate and objective reports that will enable us to devise the necessary measures to protect children affected by armed conflict.

In the same vein, we hope that, through its Working Group established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the Security Council will carry out its work in coordination with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. We can be more effective only if we place this important issue in the context of the larger problem of the overall vulnerabilities and needs of children. The complexity of the issue requires that all the appropriate bodies of the United Nations, working in close cooperation with Member States and non-governmental organizations, adequately address its many components, including social and economic aspects and, in particular, the issues of demobilization and reintegration.

Among the measures launched to address the issue of children and armed conflict are concrete and time-bound action plans to put an end to the recruitment and use of children by parties involved in armed conflict. We have taken note of the progress made recently in the implementation of that strategy. We encourage the Security Council to continue to develop it in close coordination with United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams.

We also very much appreciate the positive impact of the deployment of child protection advisers. The report of the Secretary-General provides preliminary information regarding the study currently being carried out by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the role such advisers play in gathering the necessary information for monitoring and reporting purposes. That document will also be important in establishing the conditions for incorporating child protection issues into peacekeeping missions and training programmes. We look forward to considering the results of the study, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of this strategy.

Brazil remains fully committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in general. We are determined to contribute to maximizing the effectiveness of the response of the United Nations system to the issue of children and armed conflict. We believe that to be crucial to ensuring that children are not victimized by war and to securing a future in which children can enjoy hope and know trust as they emerge from conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Brazil for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

There are a number of speakers remaining on my list. With the consent of the members of the Council, I shall now suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

At 3 p.m. the Council will hold a meeting to consider a draft resolution under the agenda item entitled "The situation in Iraq".

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.